

Moscow's CFE data proves to be false

By Bill Gertz
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The Soviet Union apparently supplied false data on its weapons to be eliminated under the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty, a senior CIA official said yesterday.

CIA Deputy Director Richard Kerr told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that U.S. intelligence agencies found "major discrepancies" between declared Soviet counts in November, when the treaty was signed, and U.S. estimates for tanks, armored vehicles and artillery covered by CFE in the area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains.

The deputy CIA chief said the agency could not accurately monitor a "massive shift" of weapons by the Soviets east of the Urals starting in 1989.

"We essentially lost our place" counting the rapid removal of the equipment. Mr. Kerr said during an open hearing on monitoring compliance with the CFE accord, which was signed by 22 nations, including the United States.

The Senate is in the process of ratifying the treaty, which calls for reductions in tanks, armored personnel carriers and artillery in Europe.

Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., Delaware Democrat and chairman of the hearing, said the "data discrepancy"

once was "very large" but decreased in recent months "as U.S. intelligence agencies have revised our estimates."

"But some discrepancy remains," Mr. Biden said.

U.S. officials have said the differences between U.S. and Soviet estimates were lowered from 40,000 weapons to 17,000 pieces of equipment today.

U.S. officials and NATO allies will conduct more than 570 on-site inspections to check compliance with the conventional arms reductions, Mr. Kerr said.

Regarding the movement of equipment, Mr. Kerr said: "We have confirmed that some of the weapons being moved east of the Urals did not arrive at their destination until a month or so after signature."

But U.S. intelligence has been unable to determine if the shift violated the treaty because the origin of the weapons could not be pinpointed, Mr. Kerr said. The movement of the arms would violate the treaty if the equipment was not declared by the Soviets as part of the CFE data exchange.

Douglas J. MacEachin, the CIA's senior arms-control analyst, told the hearing that between 800 and 1,000 pieces of military equipment were involved in the shift. The arms may have been part of a stockpile of 10,900 pieces of equipment the Soviets claimed to have destroyed before the signing of CFE, he said.

Mr. Kerr also said the Soviets committed a "technical violation" of the treaty by failing to eliminate an unspecified number of CFE-limited equipment that was declared to have been destroyed before the pact was signed.

The deputy CIA chief said in an interview that the data discrepancy may have been either a deliberate deception effort by the Soviet military to protect equipment from destruction or the result of inefficient accounting.

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